Revival of Tea Industry

2294. SHRIJ.CHITHARANJAN:
SHRIVVRAGHAVAN:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that several tea estate owners have temporarily abandoned their estates due to very heavy fall in prices of tea;

(b) whether Government are aware that lakhs of workers in tea plantations are thrown out of employment thus to hunger and hardship; and

(c) if so, what steps Government are taking to save the industry and also the workers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDI) : (a) and (b) Yes Sir. It has been brought to the notice of the Government that the economic condition of some tea gardens has been adversely affected due to the fall in tea prices over the past few years besides other factors and some of the gardens have closed down. Consequently, the workers of these tea estates have also been affected.

(c) The Government and Tea Board have taken various steps to resolve the problems faced by the tea industry which would *inter-alia* increase employment opportunities for the workers in the tea industry. These include implementation of various developmental schemes by the Tea Board under which financial assistance is provided by the Tea Board for encouraging extension planting, replanting, rejuvenation pruning, infilling, creation of irrigation facilities and drainage etc.

In order to help the tea industry to come out of its problems of low price realisations. Govt./Tea Board has taken various steps which include:

* implementation of a price subsidy scheme through Tea Board under which subsidy was provided to the small growers of tea (holding upto 10.12 hectares of tea plantation) for an amount equal to the shortfall between the auction price and Rs. 55 per kg subject to a maximum of Rs. 8 per kg.

* amendment of Tea Marketing Control Order 1984 to remove the condition of obligator)' sale of 75% of tea production through public lea auctions.

* launch of a Quality Upgradation Programme in the Nilgiris district of Tamil Nadu for improving qualify of tea manufactured by small growers.

* increase in basic customs duty on tea from 35% to 70% in the Budget af2001-2002.

* ban on sale of tea in the Domestic Tariff Area by 100% Export Oriented Units (EOUs) and units in Export Processing Zones (EPZs).

* increase in the allowance under Section 33 AB of Income Tax Act from. 20% to 40% in the Budget 2001-02, designed to enhance productivity and quality through rejuvenation and replantation.

Selection of SC/ST/OBCs on merit

2295. MISS FRIDA TOPNO : Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that as provided under para 11 of Explanatory Notes to DOPT OM NO. 36012/2/96-Estt (Res.) dated 2nd July, 1997, persons belonging to SCs/STs and OBCs who are selected on merit are not required to be shown against the quota of vacancies/posts reserved for their communities: and

(b) if so. the total number of persons belonging to SC, ST and OBCs who have been selected/recruited/promoted on merit to different categories of services and not counted against the 'reserved quota of vacancies/posts' for their communities during the last three years under his Ministry?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE'MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDI): (a) Yes Sir.

(b) Information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Decline in tobacco export to Russia

22%. SHRI NANA DESHMUKH: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the issue of export of tobacco to Russia which had fallen from 40.0(H) MT to 6,000 MT was taken up in the historic meeting on the 4th November, 2001 at Moscow: